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## CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

9 June 1972

### MEMORANDUM

SUBJECT: Hanoi's Major Allies -- A Post-Summit Assessment

#### I. THE SOVIET POSTURE

1. After a hold on coverage immediately before and during the Summit, the Soviet press resumed its treatment of DRV military "successes" in the South soon after the President left Moscow. There have been the usual reminders that all "progressive" humanity remains on the side of the Vietnamese "patriots", explicit praise for Hanoi's determination, and generalized assurances of Soviet sympathy and support. But along with this there has also been an unusually strong element of implied criticism concerning North Vietnam's sole reliance on military means to achieve its goals.

2. This sort of criticism was most apparent in an authoritative article in New Times written by Vadim Zagladin, a deputy chief of the CPSU Central Committee's International Department. The article, which

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was published on 26 May and summarized in broadcasts to foreign audiences (including Vietnam) from 26-29 May, defends the USSR's mild response to US actions in May and specifically rebuts those -- presumably including the North Vietnamese -- who asked the Soviets to do more:

"People are encountered who, while seemingly pronouncing themselves in favor of the implementation of the coexistence principle, are in fact casting doubt on it in one way or another. For example, it is sometimes said that in response to a particular tough action by imperialism, the socialist countries -- and above all the Soviet Union -- have no alternative but to react in the same way, to toughen their position too."

The author stresses that any international situation that arises, "even more so an acute situation", requires that the socialist states react in a flexible manner.

3. A Soviet military commentator on 31 May ended his vivid account of alleged South Vietnamese losses in the field with the following peculiar cautionary note:

"The liberation forces hold the initiative throughout Indochina and achieve fresh successes, thus confirming that attempts to resolve the problems of Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia by force of arms are doomed."

4. Subsequently, on 4 June a Pravda article acknowledged for the first time in the Soviet press that there are "extreme left-wing" opponents of the Summit, who allegedly argue that any agreements

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are inadmissible while military conflicts exist and imperialist aggression continues. The article does not identify these opponents further, but it could easily be read as a rebuttal to Hanoi's expressions since 1 June of implicit displeasure with the Summit and with the Soviet role in it.

5. Finally, on 6 June the Soviets accompanied their public greetings to leaders of the PRGRSV with their first major commentary on Vietnam since the Summit, an article in Pravda. The piece was unusually low-keyed, and was notable chiefly for its insistence that the Vietnamese Communists have only limited, reasonable aims, e.g:

"The patriots of Vietnam... are far from the thought of humiliating the national honor of the United States in any way or demanding its capitulation ... they have no intention now of imposing a Communist regime on South Vietnam."

6. In private comments since the Summit, the Soviets have been explicitly critical of both the North Vietnamese and the Chinese and fairly accommodating toward the US.

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7. On 2 June, a Soviet academic specialist on US-Soviet relations sought out a US diplomat in Moscow for a discussion on Vietnam. He predicted the DRV offensive would soon end, and (contrary to Moscow's public line) said he expected that Hanoi would accept the convening of a new Geneva conference if the US agreed to accept a coalition government.

8. Other Soviets have privately been spreading the word that the Chinese are refusing Soviet requests to forward USSR deliveries to the DRV.

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10. There have been no significant Soviet military activities which can be related to Vietnam since the Summit. The one possible exception concerns a Soviet Alligator-class landing ship which recently left Singapore on a course toward the Soviet naval group stationed off the Paracel Islands. The air evacuation of Soviet and East European specialists and their dependents from North Vietnam has continued. This was initiated during the current phase of US bombing of the DRV.

## II. THE SOVIET APPRAISAL -- CURRENT AND FUTURE

11. The Soviet leaders response to US actions in early May, together with their decision to proceed with the Summit, underscores the USSR's reluctance to risk a direct military encounter with the US and its unwillingness to jeopardize broader Soviet interests in order to assist Hanoi in the accomplishment of its war aims. And having

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acted in this way to prevent the intensification of the war from interfering with the normalization of US-Soviet relations and other important ongoing foreign policy undertakings, Moscow presumably has all the more reason to want to see those undertakings go forward to fuller success.

12. It remains our belief that the Soviet leaders' decision to respond to US interdiction efforts as they did was not an easy one, that it may indeed have caused fairly severe stress within the leadership. But we also believe it likely that Brezhnev and those colleagues who supported him have been strengthened by the success of the Summit -- and by ratification of the Soviet-FRG treaty -- and that neither the Vietnam decision nor Soviet detente policy in general is likely to face serious internal challenge in coming months. The Brezhnev leadership will, in fact, win some credit at home and abroad for having risen above the US provocation for the sake of the higher interests of the Soviet state and the easing of international tensions.

13. It is difficult to foresee developments in the war which might cause Moscow to alter its policy on Vietnam radically in the near future (excluding such extreme contingencies as a US nuclear attack on North Vietnam or an invasion of the north involving US ground forces). This is not to say that lesser shocks -- US bombing

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of the North Vietnamese dikes, signs that the North Vietnamese were on the verge of a military setback in the South serious enough to weaken their negotiating position substantially, or indications that the North Vietnamese economy was in grave difficulty -- might not put the Kremlin consensus under strain or introduce renewed tension into US-Soviet relations. But Moscow has probably believed for some time that the North Vietnamese were within reach of a favorable political settlement of the war -- one which would give them a good chance of realizing the greatest part of their war aims in the reasonably near term. We think it likely that the course of events in Vietnam in recent months has left the Soviet assessment unchanged. If this is so, it must be Moscow's intention to do what it can to prevent the war from heating up further and to encourage the US and North Vietnam to resume the Paris talks.

14. Moscow's capacity to induce the two parties to move in this direction is, of course, limited. Yet, it may be greater now than in the past. Where the US is concerned, the Soviets are probably not unmindful that the Administration is committed to continued withdrawal of US forces and the winding-down of the war generally and that failure to secure these objectives might be especially embarrassing in the forthcoming electoral period. Moscow can also, in its efforts to persuade the US to relax its military pressures,

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invoke the "spirit of Moscow" and in particular the pledges of mutual restraint exchanged at the Summit.

15. The Soviet moral position in Hanoi has almost certainly been weakened. This need not mean, however, that its actual influence there -- discreetly exercised -- has been commensurately diminished. For one thing, Moscow may be able plausibly to disclaim responsibility for North Vietnam's southern campaign, if, as seems possible, the Soviets had earlier indicated to Hanoi that it regarded this venture as untimely and fraught with risk. But whatever its feelings about Soviet staunchness, Hanoi cannot fail to recognize that it has nowhere to turn except Moscow and Peking for essential political and military support. And at this juncture, the North Vietnamese are not likely to feel any greater warmth for Peking than for Moscow. Indeed, the scales of influence might tip definitely in Moscow's favor if Peking fails to cooperate fully in facilitating the movement of Soviet military materiel to Vietnam across its territory.

16. In sum, Moscow's aim in the next phase will be to reconstruct the scenario that was developing before Hanoi began its southern offensive. This will entail continued advocacy of a political settlement. It will also involve in the interim a continued

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supply of military and economic assistance to an extent that is practically possible, though we would expect Moscow to exercise greater care to limit the flow of equipment chiefly useful in offensive operations. It would be Moscow's hope that by following this course it could avoid a deeper involvement in the war on its own part and impairment of its relations with the US, while, at the same time, winning credit for its efforts toward ending the war on terms acceptable to Hanoi.

### III. THE CHINESE POSTURE

17. In the short time since the Moscow Summit, Peking has made no discernible shift from the cautious policies that have governed its relations with Hanoi over recent months. Since the escalation of the US bombing of North Vietnam in early May, Peking has maintained its perfunctory support of Hanoi without taking extraordinary measures, either in propaganda or material aid, to bolster the hard-pressed North Vietnamese.

18. In its most recent public statement, Peking used the occasion of the third anniversary of the founding of Provisional Revolutionary Government (PRG) to repeat its pledges of support, but only in standard, pro forma terms. Even in this routine

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expression of support, the Chinese managed to convey little enthusiasm for Hanoi's renewed reliance on conventional warfare. Peking's editorial, for example, lauded the PRG for "persevering in a protracted people's war" and referred only briefly to the large-scale battles initiated by North Vietnamese main-force units.

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19. As regards Peking's logistical support for Hanoi, there is no evidence yet of any sharp deviation from past practices. We have yet to see any unusual measures on Peking's part to counter the US interdiction of sea shipments. Peking has permitted East European ships to offload North Vietnamese cargo in China but has apparently thus far stalled Soviet requests for similar treatment. Indeed, there are a variety of reports reflecting Peking's intent to block Moscow from making any spectacular show of its support for Hanoi. The Chinese continue to cite rail congestion at the Sino-North Vietnamese border -- a plausible explanation -- to justify their failure to make a massive effort to resupply the North Vietnamese.

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20. Nor have the Chinese made any apparent move to use the many small vessels in their coastal fleet to bypass the North Vietnamese ports that have been mined. The four Chinese freighters that were offloading into lighters in the Vinh and Hon La areas last week seem mainly symbols of Chinese support -- in contrast to the reluctant Soviets -- and not harbingers of a new crash effort. This is suggested by the way in which the Chinese have played up the activities of these ships. In early May the Chinese were extolling the crew of one of their ships for fighting "shoulder-to-shoulder with the Vietnamese comrades-in-arms on Vietnamese territory." This message was given even greater prominence on 9 May when China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs charged US ships and aircraft with repeatedly attacking two Chinese freighters in Vietnamese waters. Here again the intent seems to be to advertise Chinese support to Hanoi -- even in the face of US interdiction attempts -- and thus to accentuate the cautious Soviet response.

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## IV. THE CHINESE APPRAISAL -- CURRENT AND FUTURE

21. China's principal interests in Vietnam are to insure that no unfriendly regime is installed in the North, to encourage the complete withdrawal of US forces from the area, to limit Soviet influence in Hanoi while enhancing its own, and to see the eventual success of Hanoi's cause in the South.

22. None of these interests, save the first, is sufficiently vital as to cause Peking to confront the US directly with its own combat forces and the security of the regime in Hanoi does not appear threatened in the current situation. Nor is Peking's "face" directly involved in the mining of the ports since little attention has been paid to China's seaborne traffic with North Vietnam and the world tends to assume that all Chinese aid of military significance is delivered by overland means.

23. Peking will not wish to foreclose a continuing dialogue with the US and it probably judges that current US actions do not mean a reversal of the trend toward a reduction of the US military presence in Southeast Asia. Thus China's basic posture will be one of caution and restraint so long as this seems a feasible course in the light of attitudes and actions adopted by Hanoi and Moscow.

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24. This is not to say, of course, that the Chinese will not become more active in assisting North Vietnam. The Chinese earlier had a substantial force of logistic and air defense troops in North Vietnam. If they judged that the reintroduction of such units was necessary to assure the flow of supplies and preserve their credit in Hanoi, they would take this step. The Chinese would probably also, as they did before, make airfields available as sanctuary for DRV aircraft if this becomes necessary.

25. But the weight of the evidence available thus far suggests that Peking does not intend the types of action in Vietnam that would reverse its moves toward normalization in relations with the US. This latter course represents a basic shift in policy, resulting from a fundamental appraisal of Chinese interests. This course is not likely to be abandoned merely to support Hanoi's current ambitions in Indochina. Only a major and direct provocation by the US or a major shift in the political forces which now dominate Chinese policies would be likely to alter China's posture on Vietnam.

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